American Planning Association
Community Planning Assistance Teams

APA
The American Planning Association's
Professional Institute
AICP **American Institute
of Certified Planners**
Making Great Communities Happen

Community Checklist

The Community Planning Assistance Teams (CPAT) program offers pro bono expertise to communities that lack planning resources. Proposals are evaluated on the following criteria:

SELECTION CRITERIA

> Suitability of Scope
> Expertise Requested
> Project's Objectives
> Strength of Community Representative
> Strength of Community Partnerships
> Community Capacity to Carry Out Project
> Financial Capacity
> Letters of Support
> Special Considerations
> Timeline

Each of the above criteria is discussed in more detail below.

☐ Suitability of Scope

Is your project's scope of work feasible for a CPAT?

CPATs are comprised of four or five volunteers that contribute their time, experience, and expertise to a community's project. They commit a significant amount of time and work when signing on to a CPAT. Volunteers' time for projects is limited, however, and APA is careful of overcommitting their time as well as managing the expectations of the communities we work with. The time of APA staff is also limited for each project. Every CPAT project must, therefore, have clear, well-defined objectives and a feasible list of deliverables.

A Team's visit to a community is limited to four or five days. Team members are expected to review materials and participate in team conference calls ahead of the visit. Upon arriving, Team members will possess a good amount of background about your community and the particular topic(s) related to the project. In general, a Team's visit includes the following agenda items: tour of the community/study area/surrounding areas; public input meeting(s); stakeholder interviews; team work sessions involving analyses and syntheses of public input and other data; creation and development of ideas and recommendations; final report draft writing; and public presentations. A Team's work following the site visit should be minimal involving primarily the remaining additions and editing process of the final report.

It's important to note that a Team's final report is not "The plan," so to speak. The final report represents the independent findings and recommendations of the Team. A CPAT is intended to push a particular (element of a) project forward. The objectives will vary from project to project depending

on the tasks involved, previous studies, availability of data, the capacity of the Region, County, City, Town, and/or Neighborhood, political leadership, and the level of involvement from stakeholders.

Expertise Requested
Is the project something that the practice of planning can address?

APA draws from its membership base of nearly 40,000 people for CPAT volunteers. Among that 40,000 are approximately 16,000 certified planners through APA's professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), who are frequently selected for Teams. Non-members are used for Teams when a project calls for it, e.g., landscape architects. APA members and planners, in general, represent a wide body of knowledge and specialties.

A CPAT project must primarily relate to the practice of and body of knowledge that constitutes the field of urban/regional planning. For more information on the APA website about what planning means, please visit the "About Planning" section of the APA website.

Project's Objectives
Can the project's objectives be reached within the limits of the pro bono CPAT model?
Are the project's objectives in accord with the mission and values of APA and AICP?

The objectives must be in line with the principles and aspirations of APA and its professional institute, AICP. In addition, they must be feasible for the work a CPAT is able to perform in the allotted time and volunteer commitments to a project (see "Suitability of Scope" above for more on this topic).

See APA's Mission and Vision
See also AICP's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Strength of Community Representative
Does the community contact have the time, skill, resources, and leadership to effectively conduct the project?

CPAT projects are a collaborative effort. The local point person is a vital component to every project. The community contact is responsible for many aspects of a project, including tasks such as: gathering current data; conducting outreach to ensure community participation; organizing stakeholder interviews; securing locations and other local logistics; procuring maps and other materials; among other tasks depending on the needs of the project.

All community project proposals are required to include the resume of the community contact. This person must demonstrate their ability to coordinate the project with APA staff and the team.

Strength of Community Partnerships
What groups and organizations are important or potentially helpful to my community and/or planning issue(s)? Have I reached out to them to collaborate or partner?

Good planning frequently stems from creating a collaborative environment and developing solid partnerships in the community. Possibilities may include neighborhood associations, colleges and

universities, nonprofits, business associations, regional organizations, and myriad other groups or institutions that have a stake in your project and/or place.

Partnerships are important because they display wider support from the community and position a project for more sustained results and continued efforts. The CPAT program is interested in projects that have a strong chance of success. A CPAT's work is valuable, but limited in scope. A team will add value to a process, but the momentum gained rests on the shoulders of the community involved. Partnerships add weight to the probability of reaching the goals established during the planning process.

A different set of circumstances faces every community. Partnerships are not a requirement for project proposals, but attempts to build relationships with potential partners in the community should be attempted in advance of submitting a proposal.

Community Capacity to Carry Out Project
Is this the right time for a CPAT?
When the CPAT project is over, is my community prepared to commit the resources and gather the political will necessary to move the project forward?

CPAT projects should have a real chance of achieving success.   Planning often takes years, if not decades, to realize the vision and goals it sets forth. Therefore, the level of commitment needed to pursue planning endeavors is significant.   Why is *now* the right time for a CPAT to visit your community? How has your community shown that it's ready to tackle the particular challenges associated with the project? What, specifically, can a CPAT do to advance the short and long term goals for the project?

Financial Capacity
Is there dedicated funding and a realistic budget for the CPAT project?

CPATs are pro bono meaning that the time and expertise of the team members and APA staff are provided at no cost. However, communities are responsible for the travel and other expenses (airfare, hotel, food, supplies, etc.) associated with the project. Communities are invoiced twice during the course of a project; once after the preliminary visit and, finally, following the full team's visit. Budgets vary, but most fall within the $10,000 to $15,000 range. A sample budget to help you think through the costs of a project is provided within the "Community Project Proposal Form," available on the CPAT webpage. Prior to starting a project, communities are required to sign an agreement that outlines their responsibility to cover the costs of the project.

Letters of Support
Do I have three letters of support from key stakeholders to support my project proposal?

Community Project Proposals need to include three letters of support from key stakeholders, organizations, and/or partners. The letters need to demonstrate their role in the community and their commitment to the CPAT project. Letters should demonstrate a clear understanding of the project and clarify any responsibilities the group or individual plans to undertake related to the project. Letters may also include information on previous efforts undertaken and any other background information relevant to the project.

Special Considerations
Are there any unique circumstances related to the project that APA should know about?

Every place and project is unique and the CPAT program is interested in any special context about your community and proposed project. Was your community recently affected by a disaster? Is there an evolving political situation that demonstrates a timely need for a CPAT? Has your community never been engaged in a community planning or visioning event? Are there any planners employed to work in your community? Has the media exhibited particular interest in your community and/or project? What else? Let us know.

Timeline
What timeframe do you envision for your project? Is there any flexibility?

Does your project need to be completed within a certain period of time? When possible, the CPAT program will attempt to accommodate any requested project timelines, but that is subject to the current scheduling of other CPAT projects and APA events. In addition, the CPAT program is driven by volunteers who donate their time to projects, which also poses a constraint on the timing of projects.